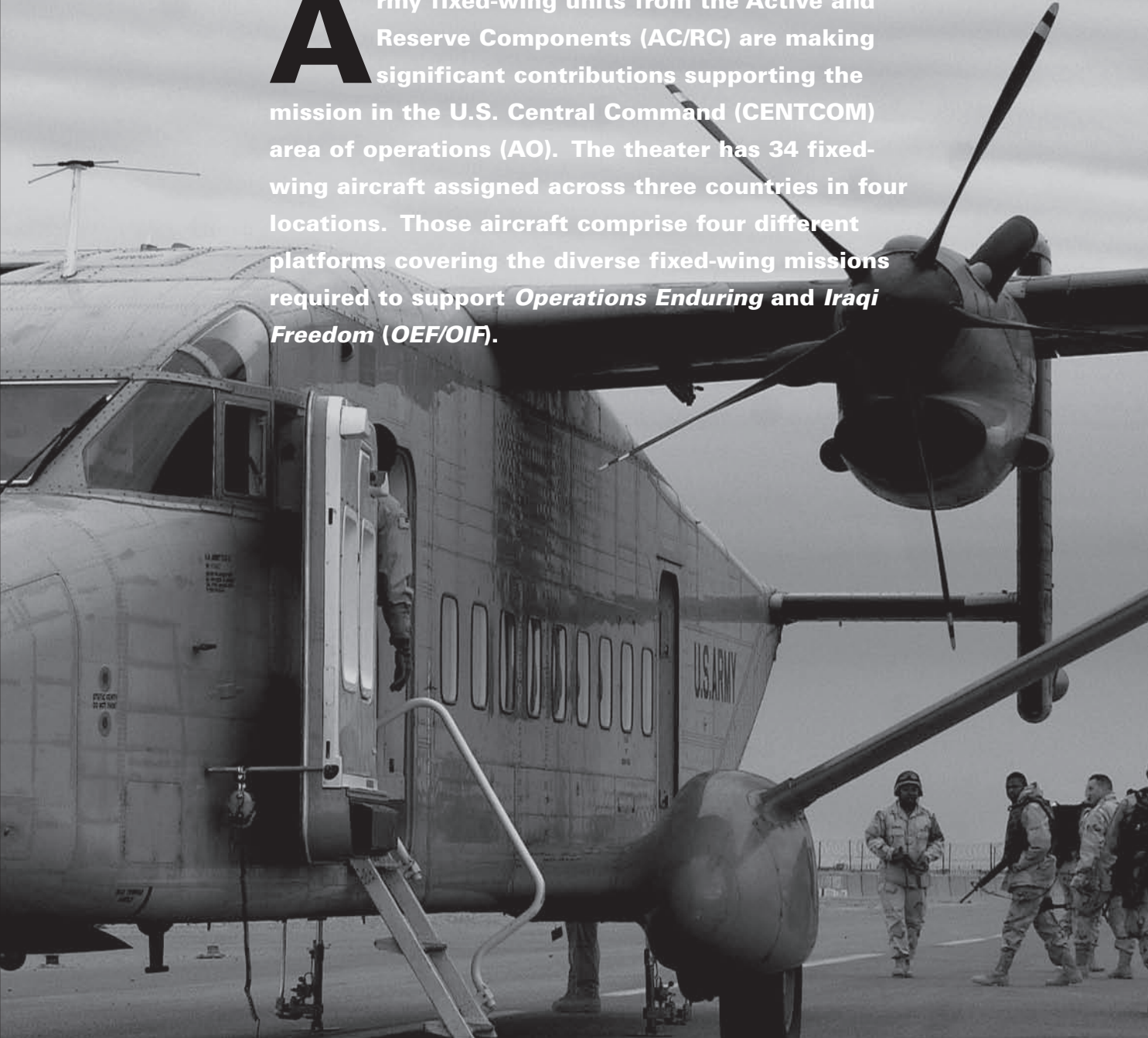


Army Fixed-Wing Aircraft Support the Fight

LTC(P) Dorothy E. Taneyhill and MAJ Thomas C. Kelley

A rmy fixed-wing units from the Active and Reserve Components (AC/RC) are making significant contributions supporting the mission in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of operations (AO). The theater has 34 fixed-wing aircraft assigned across three countries in four locations. Those aircraft comprise four different platforms covering the diverse fixed-wing missions required to support *Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)*.



Soldiers disembark from an Army C-23B Sherpa assigned to the 171st Aviation Regiment. Sherpas are being used to transport coalition troops and supplies to various airfields throughout the AO. (U.S. Air Force (USAF) photo by SSGT Shane A. Cuomo, 1st Squadron Combat Camera.)

The Product Manager's (PM) Office for Fixed Wing Aircraft coordinates closely with PM Aviation Electronics System and with deployed units to modify designated aircraft with Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE) and timely field the aircraft to theater operators. This coordinated effort currently includes the exchange of the C-12T models, which are not modified with ASE, with the C-12R models, which are. Several C-12R model aircraft currently based in Kuwait have recently received the Common Missile Warning System ASE upgrade. Aviators and Soldiers from the Missouri National Guard (NG) and the Nevada NG are operating these aircraft to transport personnel and supplies quickly over long distances and to different sovereign nations in

[MCT] efforts are vital to safe aircraft operation and they must remain prepared at all times to rapidly reconfigure large quantities of supplies to support C-23 mission requirements daily.

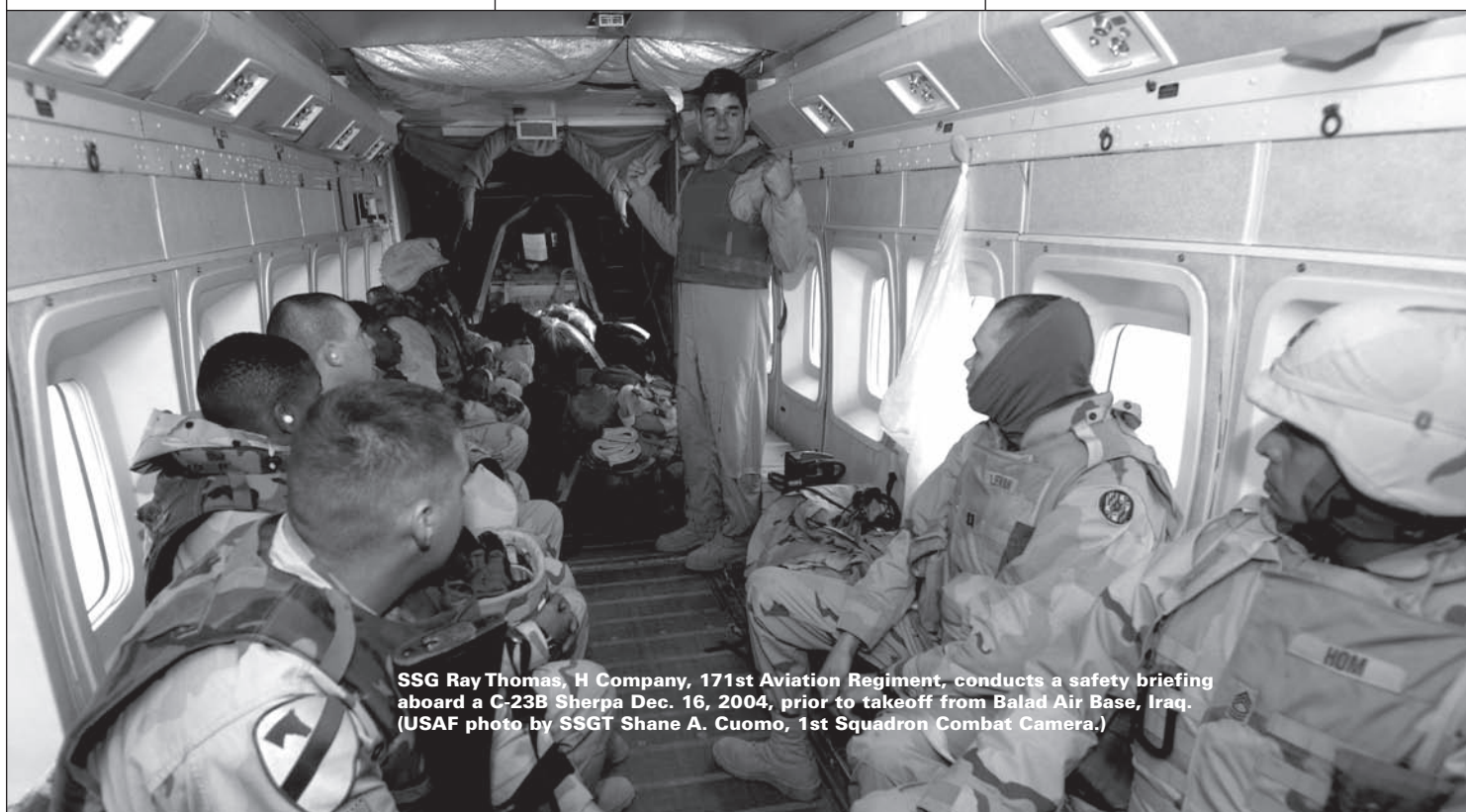
the AO. In addition to the C-12R aircraft, UC-35A aircraft are also based in Kuwait. This aircraft primarily transports key personnel and, because of its capability, effectively reduces the transport time between locations. The aircraft based in Kuwait are flying more than 50 hours per month.

The Army has 26 fixed-wing assets based in Iraq. These aircraft consist of various platforms including UC-35A, C-12R, RC-12K and C-23 aircraft.

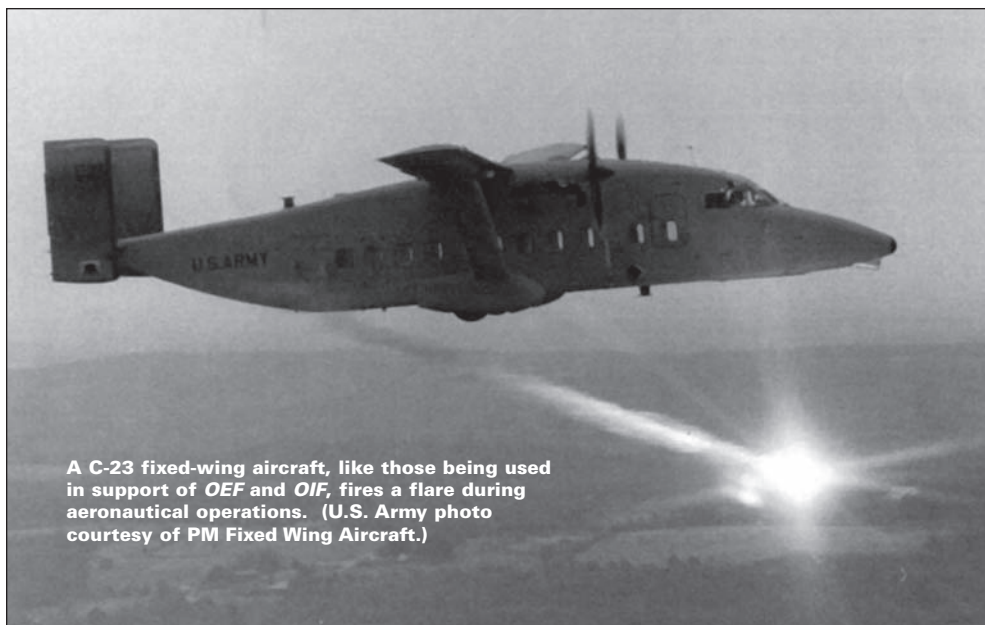
The UC-35A and the C-12R aircraft are efficient and expedient systems, used to fill the personnel transport shortages and, when necessary, assist with alleviating supply chain challenges by delivering critical repair parts to remote areas within theater. In addition, the RC-12s

conduct critical intelligence collection missions to provide commanders with time-sensitive intelligence and targeting information, which enhances the maneuver units' lethality and battle-field survivability.

Additionally, the C-23s provide timely movement of key personnel to critical locations throughout the theater of operations and transport time-sensitive, mission-critical supply items and repair parts to remote organizations. The C-23s are able to transport personnel and cargo faster and at greater distances than is possible with helicopters. Army Reservists, National Guardsmen and AC pilots are all flying the C-12s from dispersed locations throughout the AO. An AC aerial exploitation battalion flies the RC-12s. Four Army NG (ARNG) detachments from the states of Oregon, Washington, South Dakota and Oklahoma form A Company, 1/249th Aviation Battalion and are flying the C-23 Sherpa aircraft missions. These detachments, in consort with



SSG Ray Thomas, H Company, 171st Aviation Regiment, conducts a safety briefing aboard a C-23B Sherpa Dec. 16, 2004, prior to takeoff from Balad Air Base, Iraq. (USAF photo by SSGT Shane A. Cuomo, 1st Squadron Combat Camera.)



A C-23 fixed-wing aircraft, like those being used in support of OEF and OIF, fires a flare during aeronautical operations. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PM Fixed Wing Aircraft.)

E Company, 1/207th Aviation Battalion from the Alaska ARNG, are vital in supporting the logistical maintenance and sustainment mission in the CENTCOM AO.

The Movement Control Teams (MCTs) ensure the fixed-wing cargo mission's success. These teams are present hours prior to each mission and their task is to ensure the aircraft are correctly palletized with the proper weight and balance of cargo and personnel. Their efforts are vital to safe aircraft operation and they must remain prepared at all times to rapidly reconfigure large quantities of supplies to support C-23 mission requirements daily.

The two C-23 units have flown more than 6,500 hours in the past 12 months and have hauled over 3,000 passengers and 2 million pounds of cargo.

In addition to OIF, OEF is also supported with fixed-wing assets operating within the Afghanistan theater. The 1/214th Aviation Regiment, Wiesbaden, GE, is responsible for operating the C-12R and UC-35A aircraft throughout OEF. These aircraft support transport of supplies and key personnel throughout the AO. The unit

is currently flying more than 60 hours per aircraft per month. The high operations tempo at which these units are flying, combined with very few aircraft sustainment systems, makes expedient aircraft maintenance a logistics challenge.

Key mission drivers that differentiate Army fixed wing from rotary wing — in addition to greater speeds and longer range — is that unit-level maintenance is not performed by military mechanics. Currently, every fixed-wing platform operating in the CENTCOM theater of operations is Contractor Logistics Support (CLS) maintained. Two contractors maintain the four platforms at four different sites in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. The contracts that govern the agreement between the Army and the maintenance contractor are funded and managed by the Fixed Wing Product Management Office at Redstone Arsenal, AL. The CLS maintenance is even more impressive when the mission-capable rate, which consistently averages greater than 90 percent, is taken into consideration. The field service representatives for these two maintenance contractors often work long hours to ensure that uninterrupted fixed-wing support effectively translates

into mission accomplishment. Fixed-wing support to OIF and OEF forces is a decided combat multiplier. The C-23 Sherpa cargo mission assists combatant commanders by saving “blade hours” on CH-47s, as well as substantially reducing the number of convoy vehicles needed to transport personnel and critical, time-sensitive parts and supplies to potentially dangerous or remote areas. In addition, fixed-wing aerial exploitation platforms gather critical intelligence, further contributing to friendly force situational awareness. These critical roles and missions are made possible by the hard work and diverse contributions made by maintenance contractors serving as critically important combined team members. Their efforts continue to provide critical service to the Army's fixed-wing fleet.

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